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Evidence Declares Amelia Earhart, Public Were Betrayed by Politics

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THE SEARCH FOR AMELIA EARHART by Fred Goerner (Doubleday) $5.95

In 1937 Amelia Earhart—"Lady Lindbergh"—whose fame as an aviator equaled that of her male counterpart, set out with her navigator, Fred Noonan, to fly around the world. With a specially equipped Electra (a mechanic later told author Fred Goerner that prior to the flight he had been ordered to install cameras in the wings), Earhart flew to Hawaii on the first leg of the trip. There the plane was partly wrecked and sent back to the United States. When it was repaired, Earhart decided to circumnavigate the globe in the opposite direction. All seemingly went well on the flight from California to Brazil, Africa, India and New Guinea. Then on the longest stretch from New Guinea to tiny Howland Island, the plane and its occupants disappeared. After an extensive search for the aviators, the world was told that undoubtedly the plane, lost and out of fuel, had gone into the drink and that it must be presumed that Earhart and Noonan were dead.

DR. SHROYER

In 1944 and 1945, as an intelligence officer with the Seventh Air Force, I arrived on Saipan. While there I heard persistent rumors that the grave of Earhart and Noonan had been found and that their bones had been sent back to the United States. Saipan is a long distance from Howland Island, and it seemed highly improbable — nay, impossible—that their plane could have flown that far before going down. And anyway, as everyone was saying in those days, there was a war on, and I forgot the matter entirely.

In 1960, Fred Goerner, CBS reporter, learned of a woman living in San Mateo who had been on Saipan in 1937 and there had seen imprisoned two American fliers, one a woman. Goerner was intrigued by her story — perhaps "hooked" is a better word—and began a six-year investigation that took him several times to Saipan and to various military archives in Washington. "The Search for Amelia Earhart" details the story of his investigations and presents his conclusions.

After reading Goerner's sober, massively documented book, I am very much inclined to believe that what he presents is almost certainly true, and I am convinced that any reader of it quickly will drop the understandable skepticism with which he approaches it initially. Certainly Admiral Nimitz, a good friend of Goerner's, intimated time and time again that the reporter was indeed on the right track and encouraged him to keep digging. Too, the innumerable roadblocks that were thrown into Goerner's path by various government agencies, including Naval Intelligence and the CIA, suggest that the author was on to something important.

According to Goerner, then, what did happen to Earhart and Noonan?

The story begins shortly after World War I when the Marshall Islands were mandated to Japan. Once Japan moved in, the islands were cut off from the rest of the world. The United States, even then aware that Japan was preparing for World War II, was not a member of The League of Nations and thus not in a position to demand that the islands be opened for inspection. Indeed, later, when various pressures were brought to bear upon Japan, it walked out of the League.

Many men high in government and military circles suspected that the Japanese were converting the Marshall Islands into military bastions in preparation for a war that, of course, did come in late 1941. Several attempts